

Online Survey Recommendations to Improve Accessibility for Users with Blindness or Low Vision

When creating online surveys for people who are blind or have low vision, be aware that several factors can affect how participants experience your survey: the device they use (e.g., computer, tablet, or smartphone), the operating system, the web browser and its version, and the specific assistive technology (and its version) they rely on. For example, screen readers are the most common assistive technology used by people who are blind (e.g., JAWS and NVDA on Windows; VoiceOver on Mac and iOS; Talkback on Android). Each screen reader interacts with web content somewhat differently, so participants may have varied experiences depending on which screen reader they use, what version it is, and whether they are on a desktop or mobile device. People with low vision may also use screen magnification tools (e.g., ZoomText, Magnifier, Zoom); while compatibility issues appear to be less common with these tools, users may still encounter challenges.

General recommendations

- Use larger fonts (minimum 16-point) for survey takers with low vision. Bold text can also improve readability but should not replace adequate font size.
- Make sure the font color sufficiently contrasts with the background. WCAG 2.2 AA requires a minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for normal-sized text and 3:1 for large text. Black text on a white background is a common high-contrast choice that meets this standard. If your survey platform offers a high-contrast theme or color option, consider using it.
- Add alt text to any images used.
- Avoid motioned or animated page transitions (e.g., fade, flip, slide).
- Use your survey platform's built-in heading feature (not just bold or enlarged text) for section titles and question groups. Screen reader users rely heavily on headings to navigate content. Use heading levels consistently for similar content types.
- Where possible, question numbers are recommended to assist with navigation.

- Use descriptive button labels (e.g., “Next” and “Back” rather than “>>” and “<<”). If participants can navigate back to previous pages, mention this in the survey’s opening instructions as well.
- Clearly indicate when participants have reached the end of the survey, such as with a “Submit” button on the last page, a survey completion message (e.g., Thank you for completing our survey...), or both.
- Use multiple choice questions instead of matrix questions, as matrices are not accessible to screen readers.
- For questions that allow multiple answers, adding text like “Select all that apply” as part of the question is helpful.
- For required questions, include a clear indicator within the question.
- If a question restricts the type or range of responses (e.g., whole numbers only, or values between 0 and 50), clearly indicate those constraints in the question.
- When a participant enters an invalid response, make sure the error message is linked to the specific question they refer to.
- Some survey platforms may work better with certain web browsers. Check your platform’s documentation for browser recommendations and, if possible, share them with participants.
- Test your survey on mobile devices and desktop or laptop computers.
- Pilot test your survey with people who use the assistive technology(ies) of your target group. Even if you follow all accessibility recommendations, pilot testing is needed to uncover any remaining accessibility or usability issues.

Qualtrics-specific recommendations

- Qualtrics recommends using the New Survey Taking Experience, as it meets the WCAG 2.2 accessibility standards and includes a visible focus indicator that benefits screen reader and keyboard users. Note that some features are not yet compatible with this experience; if you need a feature that is unavailable (e.g., customize survey layout), you may need to revert to the legacy experience for that survey.
- *(Legacy experience only)* The “Simple Layout” style format is the more accessible option, though some logic options and question types may not be available. For participants with low vision using high contrast, the “Modern” style format works best.
- To add accessible headings in Qualtrics, use the Format dropdown menu in the rich content editor to apply heading levels (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2). This ensures headings are properly coded for screen readers.

- For multiple choice questions with a comment box attached to a response option (e.g., “No, please explain”), place that option last in the list. If it appears earlier, screen reader users may get “stuck” in the comment box and have difficulty moving on to the next question.
- Rank order questions can be challenging for screen reader users regardless of format. In the New Survey Taking Experience, only the ‘drag and drop’ format is supported, which is not accessible. If you must include a rank-order question, the ‘text box’ format in the legacy experience is the most accessible option, though some participants may still find it difficult to use.
- Use Qualtrics’ Check Survey Accessibility feature (*Tools>Review>Check Survey Accessibility*) to identify accessibility issues in your survey and get specific suggestions for improvement. The tool checks against WCAG 2.0 AA standards for the legacy experience and WCAG 2.2 AA standards for the New Survey Taking Experience.
- For more information on accessibility in Qualtrics, see Qualtrics’ [Survey Accessibility documentation](#).
- The [Qualtrics Community Forum](#) is a searchable resource where users can discuss accessibility and other survey-related topics.



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